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SOUTH AFRICA

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke
van die Kaap, Natal en Transvaal

Dutch Reformed Church
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

No. 39 119, De Korte Street, Johannesburg, Union of South Africa. **FEBRUARY, 1961**

NEW TOTALS REACHED

The number of congregations of the Federated Dutch Reformed Churches (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke) increased by 17 last year to a new total of 859, according to the 1961 Year Book of these churches.

The number of communicant members increased by 12,422 to 691,214 while the number of adherents increased by 14,465 to a total of 1,145,747. The church in the Transvaal, with its 332 congregations, is now almost as big as the Cape church, which has 333 congregations. The Free State church has 122 congregations, the Natal church 40 and the South-West Africa church 32.

The Dutch Reformed Mission Churches increased their number of congregations in the Union of South Africa from 432 tot 442, their number of non-white communicant members from 223,433 to 230,772 and their number of baptised from 634,919 to 650,400. In the mission churches outside the Union the number of communicant members increased from 27,968 to 29,484 in Southern Rhodesia and from 66,598 to 70,319 in Nyasaland.

The white and non-white communicant members of the mother and mission churches now total more than a million for the first time in history. The latest available figure is 1,023,867.

A survey conducted by Die Voorligter, the monthly magazine of the church, shows that Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke have about 13,000 permanent employees in full-time service. This total does not include the 27,000 elders and deacons, 22,000 Sunday school teachers, and thousands of other workers who serve on a voluntary basis. The churches have 3,652 white and 8,964 non-white employees.

There are 1,473 white ministers, 113 non-white ministers and 664 non-white evangelists. Sixty ordained ministers and 40 laymen are employed as heads or secretaries of various church departments. They are assisted by 216 professional workers, 161 teachers and 1,529 white and 2,766 non-white employees.

In the various mission fields no less than 7,049 full-time workers are employed. They include doctors, nurses, teachers, artisans and servants. More people are employed in the mission fields than in all other branches of church work together. More than £1,100,000 are spent annually on missionary work.

TRANSFER OF MISSION WORK

The missionary work of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Kenya will probably be taken over by the Gereformeerde Sendingbond, a missionary organisation of the Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk)

of the Netherlands. The proposed transfer has already been approved by the Synodical Commissions of the Transvaal General Synod and the Central African Regional Synod.

The work was started by the Rev. and Mrs. B. B. Eybers in 1944, when they founded the Bwana Loubser mission station near Eldoret. Four non-white ministers have since been trained and three congregations established. The church now has 308 communicant members and 1,721 adherents. There are 16 schools, with 565 pupils. Mr. and Mrs. Eybers returned to South Africa some months ago and the work is now being continued by the non-white pastors.

The financial responsibility has hitherto been carried mainly by the Vergenoeg (Eldoret) congregation of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, with the assistance of other congregations. Because of the exodus of Afrikaners from Kenia and the uncertain future of the territory, it is, however, becoming increasingly difficult to maintain and extend the missionary work there.

The Gereformeerde Sendingbond, on the other hand, recently had to curtail its missionary work in Indonesia as a result of tension between that country and the Netherlands. Two representatives of the society then visited South Africa in search of new mission fields and the possibility of taking over the work in Kenya was brought to their attention. On their way back to Europe they visited Kenya to obtain additional information, and on their recommendations both the executive committee and the general meeting of the society decided in favour of such a step. Only the details of the transfer remain to be agreed on by the various committees on both sides.

The missionary work of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Northern Nigeria is already being transferred to the Christian Reformed Church of America, but the church is maintaining and extending its vast missionary enterprise in South Africa and in Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia.

UNTANGLING A MISNOMER

(Condensed from The Star)

It has become common to describe under the head "Dutch Reformed Church" a number of churches which are distinct from one another. The confusion resulting from this unrealistic identification of the Afrikaans churches has increased because of the exchange of statements following the recent conference of South African members of the World Council of Churches in Johannesburg.

It seems to many people as if the "Dutch Reformed Church" has been constantly changing its ground and issuing contradictory statements. Actually, the entity usually described as the Dutch Reformed Church comprises the five federated Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke, the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk.

The federated Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke is a federation of five autonomous churches which, within the framework of a single dogma, is each free to control its own affairs. The members of the federal church are the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika (Kaap), the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Natal, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in die Oranje-Vrystaat, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Transvaal and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Suidwes-Afrika.

Each of these provincial churches is governed by its own synod, and each synod in turn is divided into rings (presbyteries) consisting of a number of congregations grouped together for purposes of local management. Each congregation enjoys a large measure of autonomy

and is governed by its church council presided over by the congregation's clergyman.

The co-ordinating body is the Federal Council, which, through its various committees, gives executive effect to the combined decisions of the five synods which affect the whole federal relationship. Decisions of the separate synods falling within their own jurisdiction are put into effect by the various synodical committees.

There are, therefore, within the entity "Dutch Reformed Church" not merely three but seven autonomous churches, five of which are federated. Of the seven only three belong to the World Council of Churches. They are the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika (Kaap), the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Transvaal and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika.

The Cape and Transvaal delegates of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke subscribed to the statement of the World Council of Churches in Johannesburg, but added a reservation that they thought the principles agreed upon could be fulfilled within the framework of "separate development" of the races. Here again a distinction must be drawn. The delegates have subscribed to general principles in company with the delegates of other churches, but the official policy of each of those churches in its own sphere is a matter for that church itself to decide. The synods of the Cape and Transvaal churches will discuss the actions of their delegates in subscribing to the World Council's statement and decide their official attitudes. These two are the largest of the Afrikaans churches.

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika issued a statement saying that "the agreement that has been reached contains such a far-reaching declaration that we cannot subscribe to it." The Gereformeerde Kerk — known colloquially as the Dopper-kerk — is not a member of the World Council of Churches and has criticised the decisions taken at the consultation in an article in its official organ. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke of Natal, the Orange Free State and South-West Africa also do not belong to the World Council of Churches.

NEW BOOKS

VERTRAAGDE AKSIE (DELAYED ACTION), by eleven ministers of the three Afrikaans churches. Published by the authors in both English and Afrikaans, and obtainable from the D.R.C. Bookstore, P.O. Box 245, Pretoria (price 13s. 6d.). This book has been hailed by a section of the press as "an unequivocal condemnation of apartheid" and as an event of "tremendous significance". In one Transvaal town, on the other hand, a large meeting was held to protest against the book. The extreme reactions on both sides are hardly justified by the book itself, but show how strongly people feel about these matters. An international news agency recently circulated a report under the heading "Dutch Reformed Church Denounces Book on Apartheid". We must draw the attention of our overseas readers to the fact that this report is erroneous as far as the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk is concerned. Although some local church councils have expressed themselves against the book, no body on a synodical level has yet passed any judgment on it.

ONTSPOORDE JEUGDIGES (Derailed Youths). Fifth volume of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Family Life. This volume deals with the nature and causes of juvenile delinquency and is as important and authoritative as the first four volumes. Published by the N.G. Kerk-uitgewers (D.R.C. Publishers), P.O. Box 4539, Cape Town, and P.O. Box 245, Pretoria. Price 25s.

OP DIE SPORE VAN DIE HEILIGES (In the Steps of the Saints) by the Rev. A. J. V. Burger. A selection of photographs, with concise descriptions, of places mentioned in the Bible. The author is the editor of Die Voorligter, the monthly magazine of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. A suitable presentation volume. Published by the N.G. Kerk-uitgewers (D.R.C. Publishers). Price 50s.

STATEMENTS ON RACE RELATIONS. A brochure published by the Information Bureau of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke of the Transvaal and Natal (119, De Korte Street, Johannesburg) in English. It contains the report issued by a committee of the Federal Council of the Dutch Reformed Churches in 1956, a statement issued by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1958, a statement on the riots in South Africa in 1960, and the resolutions of the recent mission conference at Kroonstad. No one is qualified to express opinions on the attitude of the Dutch Reformed Churches toward racial issues without having studied these documents.

NEW CHURCH

As the number of congregations of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk increase (see page one), churches are erected to serve the new congregations. This new church stands at Carletonville, near Johannesburg.

Published by the Information Bureaux of the Dutch Reformed Churches, 119, De Korte Street, Johannesburg (Tel. 44-2037) and P.O. Box 144, Cape Town (Tel. 2-2595), Printed by Voortrekkerpers Beperk, Johannesburg.